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ABSTRACT

This essay examines the ways in which British literature, as a discipline, has been influenced by feminist scholarship and research into the areas of gender and sexuality. It reports that feminist literary criticism took definitive shape in the late 1960s as part of the women's liberation movement, and that a central concern of this first generation of feminist scholars was to expose the gendered formation of what was being presented as "the" literary tradition. The essay goes on to explain that feminist critics were the first to question the values of gender in the canon of men's writing, to investigate its configurations as historically specific products, and to study the cultural processes by which literary texts were accorded value. It reviews the influences of the "French" school of feminist literary criticism (based on deconstructive and post-structuralist theories) and Marxist-feminist ideas on the field, and notes that the standard British literature anthologies still contain relatively few women writers, though there has been significant improvement since the 1960s. The document includes an annotated bibliography and a list of related electronic resources. (MDM)

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Discipline Analysis

Susan Wolfson
Princeton University

WOMEN in the CURRICULUM

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Women in the Curriculum

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National Center for
Curriculum Transformation
Resources on Women
1997

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PREFACE

Since the 1970s feminist and multicultural scholarship has been challenging the traditional content, organization, methodologies, and epistemologies of the academic disciplines. By now this scholarship is formidable in both quantity and quality and in its engagement of complex issues. The National Center for Curriculum Transformation Resources on Women is therefore publishing a series of essays that provide brief, succinct overviews of the new scholarship. Outstanding scholars in the disciplines generously agreed to write the essays, which are intended to help faculty who want to revise courses in light of the new information and perspectives. Each essay is accompanied by a bibliography that includes references for further reading, resources for the classroom, and electronic resources.

Elaine Hedges

Series Editor

BRITISH LITERATURE

Although there were scattered harbingers in earlier decades, feminist literary criticism took definitive shape in this century in the late 1960s as part of the "women's liberation movement," sharing its sense of polemical activism and cooperative endeavor. Its sites were academia in the United States and journalism and the press in Great Britain, and its first lively (but not exclusive) focus was on these national literatures—an enterprise later called "Anglo-American" feminist criticism. Its polemics received wide public notice in 1970 with Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, and over the decade they gained an academic audience in the pioneering work of Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, and Patricia Spacks. In the 1980s some feminist critics tuned their analyses to European, particularly French, philosophical theory, and by the 1990s the interests of feminist criticism were intersecting with a wide range of concerns and expanding into "gender criticism."

From the late eighteenth century on, there were women and a few men commenting on literature in terms congruent with feminist literary criticism, but it was not until the 1970s, with the flourishing of the women's liberation movement, the growing number of women in graduate programs, and the gradual increase of women on academic faculties, that a professionally coordinated project took shape. By the 1960s women were a large population in

undergraduate English majors (and still are), but this major tended to be a "finishing" enrichment, not a pre-professional study; and though there were women in Master of Arts programs, these also tended toward enrichment, or the provision of "finishing" credentials for secondary-school teachers. Most of the doctoral students training for the professoriate and most of their professors were men (and faculties are still primarily male, though the proportion has shifted). But with the expansion of university budgets and the energy of civil rights acts in the 1960s, more women entered doctoral programs, and by the 1970s literature departments began slowly (some voluntarily, some under administrative or legislative pressure) to hire them as assistant professors and, by the decade's end, to promote some to tenured ranks. It was not feminist critics who usually profited from this liberalism, however; their polemics and focus on writing by women (some previously unheard of) were regarded skeptically by many senior colleagues, who were more disposed (if disposed at all) to women whose work treated familiar texts and proceeded in familiar modes of criticism and scholarship. Even so, the important cultural development was a growing professional and pre-professional community of women.

It was this community, spread across various institutions, that fostered the conversations about reading, writing, teaching, and research that evolved into "feminist literary criticism." Women students (both undergraduate and graduate) and female professors (mostly young), often in stimulating conversation with intellectual women in the culture at large, began to articulate critical perspectives on the ideologies of gender which inform traditional literary study and, along with the articulating of this critique, to reread or discover lost or neglected women writers. Among the landmarks are Ellen Moers's *Literary Women* (1963), Patricia Spacks's *The Female Imagination* (1975),

Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). As the titles suggest, the primary concern was with women writers, their traditions, social situations, and distinguishing modes of imagination and literary representation. These studies had several related projects: to produce new analyses of the few women writers in the canon and to recuperate other lost or neglected writers; to develop descriptions of the textual and narrative strategies by which women writers attempted to find a voice and account for their experience; and to study these dynamics in relation to the representation of women and gender by canonical male writers, usually with a focus on patriarchal oppression. Showalter dubbed this set of interlocking interests "gynocriticism": "the history of styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition," all implicitly defined against the dominant models of male literary tradition ("Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness").

A central concern of this first generation was to expose the gendered formation of what was being presented as "the" literary tradition: its domination by men's writing, its unmarked designation of masculine as the linguistic and cultural norm, and its related definition and evaluation of "feminine" differentials—the terms by which men understood themselves and their writing by marks of difference from practices and categories securely (or not so securely) labeled "feminine." These features, feminist critics noted (often recalling their own instruction), tended not to be discussed as the product of problematic social attitudes and other historically specific conditions, including the patriarchal structure of the academy itself. Rather, they were typically treated, in both criticism and teaching, as if a fact

of nature. Indeed, for decades, this "naturalized" canon of literary study, gender-marked as it was, carried the *imprimatur* of university authority and professional expertise. It was what was conveyed to English majors—the young men who comprised the major in the first half of our century and then the increasingly female population of post-war academia.

In literature, as in culture at large, ideologies of gender and sexual difference may be overtly stated, sometimes with elaborate social and even religious authority. Their force more often derives, however, from their naturalization, their implicit presence within structures of imagination whose aesthetic power may encourage tacit assent. What are these informing attitudes? First, the attitude conveyed by the mostly-male canon itself: that the study of literary imagination is equivalent to men's experience as readers, thinkers, dreamers, lovers, writers, and doers, and that writing by women lacks sufficient aesthetic accomplishment for serious attention; "there are few or no 'good' women writers," was the flat declaration or unhappy admission. Until the early 1970s, in fact, women writers were largely absent from the study of "British Literature." Classroom syllabi, anthologies, standard literary histories, and critical discussions rarely included them. Among the sporadic exceptions were Jane Austen, Emily Brontë, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Emily Dickinson, and Virginia Woolf—writers whose aesthetic practices proved most inviting to prevailing techniques of critical analysis and who, not coincidentally, tended to earn praise for a "masculine" style or philosophical sense (terms similar to the ones by which women, not usually feminist critics, were first added to professional faculties). But these writers remained a minority and marginal presence in literary study, and other women writers, even ones widely read in their own day, were reduced to anecdotes or biographical

frames (footnoted as wives, sisters, friends of male writers) or not noted at all, consigned to oblivion.

Correspondingly elided in critical discussion were the attitudes toward gender in the male texts themselves. However complex the aesthetic practices and ideological orientations, writing by men, feminist critics suggested, tends to be "men's writing," exhibiting culturally sanctioned representations of women not as active agents or imaginative thinkers, but as objects of male desire and fantasy, conceptual and thematic bearers of such symbolically feminized terms as nature, spiritual beauty, and innocence, or, in a different tone, erotic threats to male self-sufficiency and demonic contaminators of patriarchal culture. They noted a related tendency in men's writing (if not stable, unanimous, or limited to men) to present orthodox attitudes about sexual and gender differences: celebrations of female character and behavior for the "naturally feminine" virtues of obedience, silence, meekness, and self-effacement that ensure women's passivity and acquiescence, or, alternatively, condemnations of transgressive, rebellious "unnatural" women. Rarely looked at as subjects for criticism, moreover, were such male-invested stories as the "romance" (even "thrill") of a woman's ravishment (her forced acquiescence to a man's desire), the comedy of humiliating an assertive or rebellious woman, the ridicule of intellectual women, the marriage plot that reins in female protagonists, the misogyny aimed at old, single, or professional women, or the paradigms that restrict female creativity to motherhood. In a canon of classics said to be determined by objective judgments of aesthetic value tested by time, feminist critics exposed an ideology of gender that was uncomfortable to behold. "Something peculiar has been happening lately to the classics," remarked one male professor in 1983. "Some of them now seem less heroic, and some of them less funny."

Feminist critics were the first to put into question the values of gender in the canon of men's writing, to investigate its configurations as historically specific products, and to study the cultural processes by which literary texts were accorded value. They focused on the silence and suppression of women's voices and experiences, both in the general canon and in its male-authored texts and uncovered the distortions and contradictions often masked by, but which sometimes erupted into, dominant ideologies of sexual difference and priority. This project came to be known as "feminist critique," described by Showalter as an "historically grounded inquiry which probes the ideological assumptions of literary phenomena . . . the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and the fissures in male-constructed literary history" ("Towards a Feminist Poetics"). This first generation of feminist critics was not after a mere liberal inclusion of women writers in this literary history and its canon. They meant to reshape literary study itself. Writing by women disclosed authors, texts, and generic traditions (journals, diaries, travel-writing, children's literature, tracts, sentimental fiction) that changed the overall map.

One particular consequence was a review of a genre in which women writers were prolific, the novel. As Austen, the Brontës, Eliot, and Woolf were read afresh and novels by other women were rediscovered, the history of the genre was revised. Part of this revision was a "gender/genre" critique: a study of how women may accede to, work against the grain of, revise, or subvert the forms, both literary and ideological, that repeatedly shape men's writing in a genre. Related to this question was a focus on the representation of subjects of specific concern to women writers: women's oppression and women's rights, female desire, maternity, the social and domestic conditions of

marriage, home, and family, charity work, and the conflicts besetting women's professional ambitions, especially as writers.

As the vocabularies may indicate, a central project of first-generation feminist literary criticism was the articulation of gender "difference." These critics sought to define a "female" tradition marked by women's concerns and experiences and distinctively "female" aesthetic practices. Formulating these differentials sometimes courted reductive descriptions of male-authored texts (e.g., the claim that it is only women's texts that make closure problematic, that subvert authority, that fall into fragments) and masculine literary traditions (writing by men is monolithically sexist and patriarchal). Yet the questions these critics raised, especially when they brought them to bear on specific texts and moments in literary and social history, were decidedly illuminating, and have indelibly marked literary study.

In the 1980s, with the rise of deconstructive (post-structuralist) theory in psychoanalytic, linguistic, and literary interpretation, one form of feminist critique—influential at the time, though in retrospect, perhaps evanescent—took a distinctively "French" turn on questions of gender difference. (The label refers less to the critic's nationality than to intellectual orientations and methodological commitments.) Already steeped in the structuralism of Roland Barthes, the neo-Freudian psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan, and the deconstructive post-structuralism of Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man, French feminist theory set itself over and against the previous decade of Anglo-American feminist criticism, targeting in particular the notions of woman as author and women's texts as expressions and reflections of their historical, social, cultural, and institutional experience. Critiquing these notions as a problematic essentialism (the assumption of historical reference as a stable ground of meaning), French feminists disdained

the consequent descriptions of "woman's literature" or "women's imagination" and promoted gendered categories, arguing that "feminine" and "masculine" were not so much terms of historical existence as products of language itself, to be grasped in terms of psycholinguistic origins and writing effects. They described a "phallocentric" structure of learned language—man as authority and norm, whatever the historical moment or cultural site—its suppression of the "feminine," and its deconstruction by *écriture féminine*.

Viewing gender difference as a textual production and a signifying system (and more often than not, reading texts written by men), these theorists argued that the phallocentric binary *masculine/feminine* imprints a whole array of hierarchically gendered positions and values, among them, subject/object, active/passive, law/anarchy, culture/nature, reason/emotion. While this ideological structure may seem familiar from any number of master-narratives (e.g. *Paradise Lost*), the French wrinkle was the psycholinguistic story: a process of acculturation whereby the symbolic order of "masculine" language displaces a pre-linguistic, pre-oedipal, "feminine" semiotic concentrated on the immediacy of the mother's body. Under the "Law of the Father" imposed with the learning of language, the immediacy of the female body is sacrificed to the symbolic system in which male is the center and female the "other." For women under the law, it seems the consequence is only a choice of alienations—either a capitulation to a linguistic system that positions them as "other" or, refusing this system, a fate of resistant but impotent silence.

But writing, French feminists hastened to argue, is not totally under this domain. Its processes bear a potential for subversion, deconstruction, even liberation. Texts may

challenge the Law of the Father by destabilizing representation, rupturing coherent structures of meaning, and refusing the metaphysical essentialism investing the symbolic order. This is *écriture féminine*, a "writing effect" that eludes and disrupts the masculine legislation of linearity, rationality, logical and structural coherence, and as it does so deconstructs its imposition of gender. Hélène Cixous thus urges (and practices) a "feminine" discourse of "writing of the body," which she claims is continuous with female sexual vitality and thus a creative assertion against the law that would oppress and silence women. Luce Irigaray disputes the Freudian marking of the female body as a "lack" (of penis) to advance the positive feminine "différence" of a multiple *jouissance* of pleasure, freedom, and plenitude, and a *parler femme* that asserts itself in mimicry of "phallocentric" discourse. Julia Kristeva substitutes for a body-authorized *écriture féminine* a semiotics of the "marginal" and the heterogeneous. Drawing on the shared French account, she argues that this *écriture*, originating in mother-infant semiotics, is not absolutely lost under the "Law of the Father" but can be tapped through revolutionary writing, a post-Symbolist, avant-garde textual practice not limited to women but at play in such writers as Joyce, Céline, Artaud, and Mallarmé. What of the historical identity of women? Kristeva addresses the question deconstructively, arguing that identity does not exist outside of or prior to language, but is constructed in language as a "subject in process," "constantly called into question, brought to trial, over-ruled" ("A Question of Subjectivity"). Alice Jardine has dubbed all these "feminine" textual processes "gynesis," a theoretical term she sets over and against Showalter's "gynocriticism."

But if the French school thus regards the Anglo-American as theoretically naive and uncritically attached to categories that masculine tradition has used to subject

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women (author, expression, experience), Anglo-American feminists have countered that French theory merely celebrates under the sign of the "*féminine*" an essentialism of the female body and array of values (maternity, feelings, sexuality, irrationality) that have been traditionally invoked to subjugate women. They have suggested, moreover, that for all its theoretical panache, French feminism is problematically ahistorical, and among the consequences is its blindness to contradictions between "feminine" textual effects and its scriptors, whose ideological orientations may be patriarchal (Joyce and Faulkner, for instance) or in flight from questions of women's political oppression—e.g. Virginia Woolf's aesthetics of androgyny, an aesthetic she reads only in male writers. And just at the historical moment when women are recovering their long ignored voices and forgotten history and are defining their distinctive political concerns, French feminism may be playing into the hands of anti-feminists by arguing that these categories are theoretically untenable, elusive, unreal.

In the 1980s, Marxist-feminists critiqued both Anglo-American and French feminism, arguing that gender needed to be situated in the more inclusive subject of political oppression, a context in which ideologies of race, class, and culture cut across sex-based categories of difference. Some of their essays focused quite harshly on the class bias evident in the feminist polemics of Wollstonecraft and Woolf, on the neglect of working-class writers by mainstream feminist criticism, as well as on a noticeably heterosexist orientation—features, they suggested, aligned with the masculine tradition from which feminism was otherwise at pains to differentiate itself. Other essays noted an unexamined racism in these documents and a general neglect of the often different experience of women of color, for whom, say, "slavery" is not just an analogy for women's domestic and social oppression but a fact of history. In

consequence, the second decade of feminist criticism developed important analyses of how race, class, and sexual orientation mark differences within women's writing and literary history. However one addresses this range of issues, it's clear that feminist literary criticism has become a wide and various project, and that its interests, techniques of reading and inquiry, and theoretical affiliations have expanded and proliferated across traditional disciplinary demarcations. Yet even as feminism has challenged literary study (as well as philosophical, linguistic, psychoanalytic, historical, sociological, legal, cultural, anthropological, and media studies, and any number of hyphenations between these fields), the 1990s are witnessing an emergence that may signal either the demise of, or an evolution out of, a specifically "feminist" theory and criticism.

This is "gender" theory and criticism, whose concerns, like feminism's, range widely across the disciplines and, following feminist criticism's self-correction, study differences of race, class, nationality, and sexual orientation. In literary study, it had some anticipations: in 1981, an essay by Myra Jehlen, "Archimedes and the Paradox of Feminist Criticism," critiqued gynocriticism as unproductively isolated and urged feminists to develop analyses of the dominant canon of writing by men as "men's writing," situating its and women's texts in a radically comparative analysis of their contingency. Her proposal was controversial at a time when work on women writers was still seeking legitimacy, but it proved prophetic. Gender criticism took decisive shape in the 1980s and is now a consolidated field. It turns more fully than feminist criticism to writing by men; it also shifts the terms of critique, being more inclined to study the paradigms of sexism, misogyny, oppression, and patriarchal complicity for instabilities, fractures, and divisions, showing how men's texts may reflect upon, question, or even challenge dominant ideologies of

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gender. And where most feminist critics were/are women, many gender critics are men—a mixed company anticipated in the 1980s as men began to write feminist-toned criticism and deploy feminist theory.

These have been happy developments for some, unhappy for others. Some feminist critics, especially the women who pioneered the project, view the entrance of men into feminism as an opportunistic appropriation of their work, once the battle was won. "Women generated feminist criticism, fought for its importance, and often suffered in their careers for being identified with a radical movement," Showalter reminds us in her introduction to *The New Feminist Criticism* (1985). Feminist critics also worry that their laborious recovery of women's writing and literary traditions might be marginalized by an all-too-familiar male hegemony, newly armed with a feminist critique of patriarchy but prone to return priority to male texts and male critics, and not particularly motivated by the political commitments that have infused feminist criticism by women. Gender critics, both male and female, answer that their work has grown out of feminist criticism, demonstrating its success; it was feminist criticism, after all, that established "gender" as an important category of literary analysis and theory. Gender criticism is "a new phase in feminist criticism, a significant and radical expansion of our work," Showalter put it a few years later in her introduction to *Speaking of Gender*. The issues first articulated in feminist criticism have proven so forceful that they have been exported, carrying the promise, in Showalter's estimation, of moving us "a step further towards post-patriarchy."

By the early 1980s it was clear that feminist literary criticism and attention to female writers had gained institutional legitimacy. These achievements consolidated over the decade, their success evident in the curricula of English

courses from junior high school through graduate school (and new questions on SAT and GRE exams), new courses on women writers, and the revised syllabi of "period" courses. Courses in Romanticism, for example, which previously privileged six male poets (Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats), now tend to include some women writers—the most popular being Mary Wollstonecraft, Dorothy Wordsworth, and Mary Shelley—and in consequence they may bear new titles, such as "Romantic-era Literature" or "British Literature, 1780-1830," that implicitly refrain from the gendered assumptions of "Romanticism." And the classroom anthologies, previously dominated by David Perkins's *English Romantic Writers* (1967), have evolved accordingly. Perkins included only one woman, Dorothy Wordsworth, whose journal received 6 out of his anthology's 1255 pages. In 1995, Perkins, with an ironic sense that new Romanticism was actually more truly retro (that is, going back to the pre-war days when wide reading in the field was the norm and when historical contextualizing was the dominant mode of study), published a second, expanded edition, with ten more women writers, who now occupy 125 out of 1340 pages; Dorothy Wordsworth's poetry is added, as well as writing by Anna Barbauld, Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Mary Wollstonecraft, Joanna Baillie, Helen Maria Williams, Mary Tighe, Felicia Hemans, Mary Shelley, and Letitia Landon. But Perkins's hegemony is being challenged by an exciting new anthology (from his own publishers), Anne Mellor and Richard Matlak's *British Literature: 1780-1830* (1996). This even larger (by about a hundred pages) anthology, conspicuously omitting the "R" word from its title (regarding this as a problematic concession to the word's identification with literature by men), reflects "the major role that women played in the production of literature at this time, as well as the wide range of social and political debates to which both canonical and noncanonical writers responded."

Of about sixty writers in its contents, almost half, twenty-five, are women, whose writing occupies (again) almost half (forty-five percent) of their pages.

This example from the field conventionally called the "Romantic Period" is a local barometer of more general developments. The most prominent measure (and, in part, a cautious agent) of such developments is the chief classroom anthology for general literary study, *The Norton Anthology of British Literature*, packaged in two volumes (Old English to late 18th century; late 18th century to late 20th). The first edition was published in 1962; it was revised periodically across the decades (1968; 1974; 1979; 1986) and is now in its 6th edition (1993), with a 7th planned for 1998 or 1999. This anthology is an important barometer both because it embodies the sense of the canon by the senior scholars who are its editors, and because its domination of the classroom has put it in the role of reproducing its canon and critical apparatus for several generations of students.

In the first and second editions (1962, 1968), totaling about 4000 pages, Volume 1 had no women writers, and the play by Shakespeare it offered (and still does) scarcely had any women characters: *Henry IV, Part I*, about male rivalries and a prince's coming of age. The first woman writer to invade *Norton's* pages, appearing 707 pages into Volume 2, was Ann Radcliffe, with one page from her gothic novel *The Italian* (1790s) presented as an example of "The Byronic Hero"—a male literary type characterized by enigmatic alienation, moral danger, and devastating seductiveness ("mad, bad, and dangerous to know," as one of Byron's lovers wrote of the prototype). Radcliffe was there, but in obvious conscription to a masculine fraternity. A few other brief islands for writing by women punctuated this volume: three pages of "lyric poetry"

by Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Emily Brontë, four pages of Christina Rossetti's poems, and seven pages of prose by Virginia Woolf. The total allotment came to 14 pages out of the two volumes' 4000—less than one third of one per cent.

The editorial treatment of these women writers, moreover, tended to be dismissive and condescending. Here is one headnote:

> Elizabeth Barrett's poetry, much of it concerned with liberal causes, was popular during the Victorian age. Today her name is remembered primarily for the sequence of sonnets in which she recorded the stages of her love for her husband, Robert Browning. (2: 1148)

The sub-editor, George Ford, offers no sample of Barrett's concern with liberal causes; he merely supplies two of those sonnets, with the implication that Barrett sustains interest only in terms of her husband. Emily Brontë is represented by a minor juvenile poem rather than, say, a passage from her sensationally popular novel *Wuthering Heights*; Christina Rossetti is introduced as "the sister of Dante Gabriel Rossetti" and as an exception to the editor's blandly proffered statement that "England, the birthplace of poets, has produced few women poets of note" (2: 1162-1163)—not "of note" to this editor, perhaps, whose bias is stated as fact. Woolf is more generously ushered into the volume by her sub-editor, David Daiches, but she is still introduced as "daughter of Leslie Stephen, the late Victorian critic, philosopher, biographer, and scholar" (2: 1869)—and not, say, as one of the most influential feminist voices of the upper-middle-class British intellectual culture or one of the most innovative experimenters in fictional form of the early twentieth-century. Although Daiches'

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headnote does get around to mentioning this last distinction, it is only after he has situated Woolf in relation to her father, the men of the "Bloomsbury group," and her husband.

This was the 1960s; the most recent, 6th edition of *The Norton Anthology*, developed in the early 1990s and published in 1993, displays a comparatively dramatic, but still qualified, evolution. In Volume 1, women writers command 112 pages instead of none, an improvement of sufficient note for marketing gurus to broadcast their names on the back jacket. Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich now join Chaucer in the Middle Ages; in the sixteenth century, in addition to Shakespeare, Spenser, and Marlow, students may discover Mary Sidney Herbert, Aemilia Lanyer, and Queen Elizabeth I (whose portrait, at least, has always graced the cover of Volume 1). The doors of the seventeenth century (the domain of Milton and Dryden) open to Mary Wroth, Margaret Cavendish, Katherine Philips, Lucy Hutchinson, Anne Halkett, Dorothy Osborne, and Anne Finch, while in the unit on the Restoration and the eighteenth century, students can sample Mary Astell, Mary Wortley Montagu, as well as another jacket-advertised "major addition"—the "complete text of *Oroonoko*, by Aphra Behn, the first professional woman of letters." Even so, as late as 1993, by which time the study of women writers and the labors of feminist criticism had reshaped the course offerings of the major college and university departments, *Norton* was noticeably conservative. Women claim only 4% of Volume 1, 112 pages out of nearly 2600. Volume 2 (1785-1983), with more resources, does better, with substantial selections from several women. The leader of the pack is still Woolf, who now weighs in at 90 pages instead of 14; and the next in line is Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, now with a 30-page selection. Other women with rather less but

still double-digit representation include Dorothy Wordsworth, Mary Shelley, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Katherine Mansfield, and Edna O'Brien. Volume 2 includes 23 women in all, whose texts occupy 300 pages or about 12 percent of the whole.

Looked at one way, this is a better than two-hundred fold increase over the first edition, but looked at as an absolute number, it's still pretty slender representation. This is partly the result of market research, whose agents report that many of *Norton's* biggest and steadiest customers like the standard canon and don't want to or don't know how to teach unfamiliar texts by women. Executives tell editors not to tinker too much with a successful product. It's also a consequence of the fact that novels—the genre in which women writers have excelled—do not adapt as well to anthologizing as do poetry, essays, and short fiction. It has been pointed out that Norton does offer several novels by women in nicely edited, fairly affordable "Norton Critical Editions" that can be ordered with the anthology. Even so, because *Norton* (at least for the present) is the chief vehicle for conveying "British Literature" to students, the impression made by the still minor place it gives to writing by women is critical. The icon of the anthology itself is a powerful semiotic, and the minority place of women therein an important signifier, with women's texts having to appear as shrink-wrapped supplements. Norton's editors have not found a way to include short fiction by women other than Woolf, even though they include a novella by Conrad, nor have they chosen to re-examine their policy barring excerpts from novels, even though they have always excerpted long works, albeit poetic ones, by men (e.g. *The Faerie Queene*, *Paradise Lost*, and *The Prelude*).

By 1997, the Norton will have competition from *The Longman's Anthology of British Literature*, an anthology developed in response to wide-spread discontent with the

Norton and creating quite a buzz even in its pre-publication phase. Its general editor, David Damrosch, has assembled an editorial board that is half men and half women, most of whom came of age in the 1970s and 1980s (cf. the Norton's board, which has two women out of fourteen editors, the younger of whom is in her fifties). Damrosch's team has created a deliberate alternative to *The Norton Anthology*, not only giving far greater representation to work by women but also including a wealth of documents relevant to the social situation of women in various centuries. Volume 1 contains an entire play by a woman (Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Miriam*) and Volume 2 an entire novel by a woman (Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*).

It is clear that the 1990s are shaping up as a decade in which women's writing is becoming increasingly available, by force of new anthologies and reprints of long-out-of-print writing by women, and by the emergence of on-line texts and editions of women's writing, accessible on the internet through (among other websites) the University of Virginia's Electronic Text Center, the Brown University Women Writers Project, and the University of Pennsylvania Department of English home page. Stay tuned; things are changing very quickly.

Bibliography

Because feminist criticism of British literature has often included discussions of American literature and been in conversation with feminist work in that field, as well as with French feminist theory, I list some key items in these related fields.

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I. Key Texts in British Letters, General Issues, and Introductory Studies

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is regarded as the first major feminist polemic in British letters, much of it proceeding as literary criticism—of attitudes about gender in male writers such as Milton, Pope, Rousseau, and in the social text of gender (language used to praise and dispraise women). Carol Poston's Norton Critical Edition (1988) carefully annotates and resourcefully contextualizes this tract with selections from other key feminist statements of the age (Mary Hays and Catherine Macaulay), contemporaneous anti-feminist reactions, background documents on women's education, and modern critical essays on the social, political, and ideological contexts in which *A Vindication* was published.

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), the first modern-era statement of feminist criticism, examines the situation of a woman of letters in relation to a literary tradition not only largely defined as male, but intent on excluding women.

Ellen Moers' *Literary Women: The Great Writers* (1963) defines a distinctive tradition of female writing from the themes and issues that occupied major women writers from the late 18th century to the 1970s. Over the course of this lucid, wide-ranging investigation of "the deep creative strategies of the literary mind at work upon the fact of female," Moers formulates some conceptual categories that have proved influential, especially "heroinism" and "the Female Gothic."

Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970) is praised as one of the first feminist critiques of male authors but also criticized in some quarters for its failure to deal with women writers and to credit relevant critical work by women. Focusing on Freud, D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, Jean Genet, Millett argues that there is a fundamentally political (not just personal and social) structure to relations of the sexes, namely patriarchal

dominance. Her discussion of women's alienation as readers lays the groundwork for Judith Fetterley's critique of the American novel tradition.

Patricia Meyer Spacks' *The Female Imagination: A Literary and Psychological Investigation of Women's Writing* (1975) is a wide-ranging discussion in the mode of gynocriticism, focusing on how specifically female experiences affect women's structures of imagination, writing, and self-representation.

Nina Auerbach's *Communities of Women* (1978) studies works by British and American women (Louisa May Alcott, Elizabeth Gaskell, Dorothy Sayers, Sylvia Plath, Muriel Spark) to tell a positive story of women's relations with one another.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's landmark anthology, *Shakespeare's Sisters: Feminist Essays on Women Poets* (1979), takes its title from a famous meditation in Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* ("what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister"); the essays not only bring attention to neglected women poets but also provide a ground-breaking demonstration of feminist criticism.

Elaine Showalter's "Towards a Feminist Poetics" (in *Women Writing and Writing about Women*, ed. Mary Jacobus, 1979; and ext. Eagleton's *Feminist Literary Theory*), is a lively articulation of the challenges for feminist literary criticism at the end of its first vigorous decade; arguing that a "feminist critique" of men's writing (with a sample application to Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*) is a dead end, Showalter renews her call for gynocriticism, "a female framework for the analysis of women's literature . . . based on the study of female experience."

Jane Tompkins' "Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History" (*Glyph* 8, 1981; rpt. Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*; included in Tompkins' *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*, 1985), is one of the first

demonstrations of how canon-formation (the texts defining the main literary tradition) is less a matter of objective value judgments than an ideological project inflected by attitudes about gender. The case in point is the genre of the 19th-century sentimental novel which, despite wide popularity and social influence, is conspicuously neglected in standard literary histories—a neglect, Tompkins argues, due to its female authorship and its female-identified mode of sentiment.

Myra Jehlen's "Archimedes and the Paradox of Feminist Criticism" (*Signs* 6, 1981; rpt. Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*), quite controversial for its critique of the prevailing gynocriticism of 1970s, anticipated gender criticism. Jehlen urges feminist criticism to study women's writing in relation to the "dominant literature"—the canon of writing by men—and to develop a radically comparative analysis of their contingency. This was followed by Lillian S. Robinson's "Treason Our Text: Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon" (*Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 2, 1983; rpt. Showalter's *New Feminist Criticism* and Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*), which urges feminist critique to move beyond gynocriticism to challenge the aesthetic values and practices and ideologies of gender that shape the dominant masculine tradition.

Elaine Showalter's "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" (*Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed. Elizabeth Abel, 1982) is a sharp, lucid assessment of the shape of this criticism in the early 1980s. Calling for continued work on cultural models within which to evaluate women's writing, Showalter argues for a comprehensive gynocentrism of social contexts—including an analysis of differences of class, race, nationality, and history—over a problematic privileging of any particular discipline (e.g. biology, linguistics, literary study or psychoanalysis).

Marjorie Garber's *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety* (1992), more a cultural study of gender than a specifically feminist criticism, is a fascinating analysis of figures of cross-dressing as the site of anxieties about definitions and distinctions of gender, class,

race. The value for feminist literary criticism is Garber's attention to how scenes of cross-dressing construct and deconstruct gender difference.

II. Anthologies of Key Essays

Marlene Springer commissioned original essays for *What Manner of Woman: Essays on English and American Life and Literature* (1977) to respond to the rise of feminist inquiry. Assigned to every major literary period of British and American literature, the essays examine the literary culture and their key defining works in relation to the historical, cultural, political, sociological, philosophical and legal climates informing the literary representation of women (mostly in writing by men, but with good attention to the complicit or dissenting forces in women's writing, especially in later centuries).

Each essay in *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, ed. Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn (1985), provides an introduction to a key critical issue and an extensive bibliography. Especially helpful are Sydney Janet Kaplan's "Varieties of Feminist Criticism," an overview of its forms in the mid-1980s, and Adrienne Munich's "Notorious Signs: Feminist Criticism and Literary Tradition," an argument similar to Jehlen's (above), for the need to address writing by men, particularly with an eye to its tropes of authority and its representation of women.

The essays in *Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class, and Race in Literature and Culture*, ed. Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt (1985), develop a materialist-feminist critique, using applied criticism and theory to read 19th- and 20th-century texts in terms of sexual identity, race, and class.

Mary Eagleton's *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader* (1986) offers a convenient way to sample by excerpts several key essays, organized with cogent introductions under the topics "Finding a Female Tradition,"

"Women and Literary Production," "Gender and Genre," "Towards Definitions of Feminist Writing," "Do Women Write Differently?"

Elaine Showalter's *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory* (New York, 1985; London, 1986) presents essays by women that shaped the first decade of this criticism. Involving attention to Charlotte Brontë, Thomas Hardy, Doris Lessing, as well as several American writers, the overall focus of the volume is on theories of sexual difference in reading, writing, and literary interpretation. There is also a substantial bibliography of key subjects: Feminist Critical Theory, English and American; Women's Writing, American and English; Women's Poetry and Poetics; Black Feminist Criticism; Lesbian Feminist Criticism; Gender, Genre, and Representation; French Feminist Critical Theory; French Women Writers and *l'Écriture Féminine*; Psychoanalysis and Feminist Theory; Maternity as Metaphor and Experience; Women and Language; Marxist-Feminist Theory and Marxist Aesthetics; Teaching, Curriculum, and Research; Further Critical Bibliographies; and Current Journals Publishing Feminist Criticism.

In *Gender and Reading* (1986), Patrocinio P. Schweickart and Elizabeth A. Flynn gather essays from a variety of methodologies and theoretical orientations, all concerned with how issues of gender shape perception, literary texts, and reading practices.

The essays in *Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship*, ed. Shari Benstock (1987), mostly on 19th- and 20th-century texts, discuss aesthetic and political issues provoked by feminist criticism and theory. Among the most famous are Elaine Showalter's "Woman's Time, Woman's Space: Writing the History of Feminist Criticism," Nina Auerbach's "Engorging the Patriarchy" (a critique of "gynocriticism" and a case for remaining engaged with the male canon), and Nina Baym's controversial "Why I Don't Do Feminist Literary Theory" (rpt. Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*).

The *Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*, ed. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (1989), offers essays examining the political purposes of feminist literary criticism.

Feminist Literary Criticism, ed. Mary Eagleton (1991), opens with the controversy over Virginia Woolf (Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* vs. Moi's *Textual/Sexual Politics*), and follows with essays that have shaped major debates in feminist criticism, by Kate Millett, Showalter, Moi, Gayatri Spivak, Julia Kristeva, Cora Kaplan, Mary Jacobus, Stephen Heath, and others.

Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism, ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (1991), is a huge (1110+ pp.) compendium of excerpts and reprints of 58 key essays, many of them classics, from the mid-1970s to 1990. Demonstrating marxist, de-constructionist, new-historicist, psychoanalytic, and structuralist approaches, these are organized and cogently introduced under topics marking central concerns: Institutions, Methodologies, Canon, Tradition, Body, Desire, Reading, Discourse, Ethnicity, History, Class, Men, Autobiography. An index gives alternative arrangements by topic (e.g. the gaze, domesticity, imperialism, poetry, race), recurring authors (Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Virginia Woolf), and texts (*Jane Eyre*).

III. Literary Studies of Particular Periods

Studies of 19th- and early 20th-century women writers loom largest on this list, because they were the first subject of feminist literary criticism—in part because this is the era in which female authorship, though controversial, found commercial success.

Medieval

§ Sir Gawain:

Sheila Fisher's "Taken Men and Token Women in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" (*Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance Writings*, ed. Sheila Fisher and Janet E. Halley, 1989) discusses the situation of women in the dominant narrative of masculine quest and rivalry.

Geraldine Heng's "Feminine Knots and the Other: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *PMLA* 106 (1991) teases out a "feminine text" that emerges as the characters defining the "masculine" narrative slip and fail. Concentrating on this emergence is a second essay, "A Woman Wants: The Lady, *Gawain*, and the Forms of Seduction," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 5.3 (1992).

§ Chaucer:

Ann S. Haskell's "The Portrayal of Women by Chaucer and His Age" (1977, in Springer's *What Manner of Woman*) is a brief, lucid survey, and one of the first feminist considerations of the subject.

Louise Fradenberg's "The Wife of Bath's Passing Fancy" (*Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 8, 1986) defines a feminist approach to this famous figure in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, complemented by Susan Crane's essay (PMLA 102, 1987), later incorporated into her book (below).

Carolyn Dinshaw's *Chaucer's Sexual Politics* (1989) brings a sharp analysis to this subject, ranging across the canon, with emphasis on the Tales.

Elaine Tuttle Hansen's *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* (1992) is a good introduction.

Susan Crane's *Gender and Romance in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales"* (1994) analyzes the construction of masculinity, femininity, and gender difference in the

romance genre and the trope of adventure, the play of feminine mimicry and masquerade, the relation of gender to social hierarchy, and the instabilities of gender in such figures as subtle male clerks and uncanny women.

Renaissance / Early Modern

Natalie Zemon Davis's "Women on Top," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (1975), is a pioneering study of how new and often subversive configurations of gender are released in times of social upheaval (festive or political) and are only ambiguously contained by the return to normal arrangements.

Catherine M. Dunn's "The Changing Image of Woman in Renaissance Society and Literature" and David J. Latt's "Praising Virtuous Ladies: The Literary Image and Historical Reality of Women in Seventeenth-Century England" (both 1977, in Springer's *What Manner of Woman*) examine new cultural pressures on long standing stereotypes.

The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare, ed. Carolyn R. Lenz, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely (1980), presents essays that basically opened up the field of Shakespeare and feminist/gender criticism.

Coppélia Kahn's *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (1981) provides one of the first feminist critiques of the systems of gender—psychological, social, political—represented in the plays.

The essays in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy Vickers (1989), address a variety of texts and cultural practices, juxtaposing feminist and gender criticism with marxism, psychoanalysis, and deconstruction. As they examine the role of women and their relations with men in the political, social and domestic structures of Renaissance patriarchy, among works of British literature discussed are Sidney's *Astrophel and*

Stella sonnets, Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream, King Lear, Othello, The Tempest,* and *Richard III,* Book 3 of Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* and Milton's *Samson Agonistes.*

Joseph Wittreich's *Feminist Milton* (1987) takes up the problematic identification of a patriarchal Milton, author of works long used to sustain male dominance and thus (ever since Wollstonecraft) the target of feminist critique. Aiming to rehabilitate Milton for feminism, Wittreich surveys women readers from 1700-1830 to show how he was enlisted as an ally in their questionings of authority.

Eighteenth Century

See Wittreich, above, for the presence of "feminist" reading of Milton in the early decades.

John Richetti's "The Portrayal of Women in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English Literature" (1977, in Springer's *What Manner of Woman*) argues that as this period progresses, anti-feminist stereotypes are challenged by an emerging counter-mythology of women, the creation of a distinctively modern kind of heroine, and the expression of a new female consciousness and female experience.

Felicity A. Nussbaum's *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women, 1660-1750* (1984) provides a critical reading of this phase of anti-feminist discourse and elaborates its classical background (the latter also a concern in Crane's essay on Chaucer's Wife of Bath).

Terry Castle's *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (1986), though not specifically a work of feminist criticism and critique, contains relevant discussions of female cross-dressing and the effect of masquerade culture on the representation of women in novels by men (Richardson's Pamela; Fielding's Amelia) and women (Burney's Cecilia, Inchbald's *A Simple Story*).

Donna Landry's *The Muses of Resistance: Labouring Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739-1796* (1990) studies this half-century of writing to show a radical tradition of female social commentary and protest.

(Mostly) British 19th Century

Elaine Showalter's groundbreaking *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1977; ext. Eagleton's *Feminist Literary Criticism*, and Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*), is written with a clarity and verve that will appeal to general readers as well as scholars. Discussing well-known 19th- and early 20th-century female novelists (the Brontës, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Doris Lessing) in relation to lesser known female contemporaries, Showalter defines three stages of the female tradition: a "feminine" stage (1840-1880) of imitating the dominant, male-authored tradition; a "feminist" protest against this tradition (1880-1920); and a modern "female" stage of defining a new practice.

Irene Tayler and Gina Luria's "Gender and Genre: Women in British Romantic Literature" (1977, Springer's *What Manner of Woman*) examines what seemed in 1977 the absence of women, except as objects of male representation and "as a muse for male inspiration." In contemporaneous female-authored novels, however (not regarded as part of the canon of "Romantic" literature), there emerges a critical reading of, sometimes a political dissent from, dominant stereotypes. Also in this volume, Marlene Springer's "Angels and Other Women in Victorian Literature" examines the force of stereotypes, both in literature and social life.

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979; ext. Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms* and Eagleton's *Feminist Literary Theory*), is a major, influential study developing the concerns of Moers and Showalter. Focusing on novel-

ists (Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, the Brontës, George Eliot) but also with attention to poets (Emily Dickinson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Christina Rossetti), Gilbert and Gubar propose a "distinctively female literary tradition" marked by recurring patterns: "images of enclosure and escape, fantasies in which maddened doubles function as asocial surrogates for docile selves, metaphors of physical discomfort manifested in frozen landscapes and fiery interiors . . . along with obsessive depictions of diseases like anorexia, agoraphobia, and claustrophobia"—all related to the social context in which women read and write. Gilbert and Gubar develop a theory of female literary creativity, showing its articulation against the dominant masculine conception of aesthetic creativity as a male quality and tracing "the difficult paths by which nineteenth-century women overcame their 'anxiety of authorship,' repudiated debilitating patriarchal prescriptions, and recovered or remembered the lost foremothers," the women writers who preceded them.

Margaret Homans' *Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson* (1980) complements Showalter and Gilbert & Gubar with a study of how three female poets attempted to define their identity as writers in relation to a dominant male literary tradition. She develops her analysis in relation to French critical theory in *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing* (1986), with chapters on Dorothy Wordsworth and Mary Shelley, among others.

Judith Lowder Newton's *Women, Power, and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778-1860* (1981; ext. Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*) uses marxist feminism to read the ideology of a politically disempowered "woman's proper sphere" and then to show how four canonical novels that seem to sustain a conservative ideology of the "feminine"—Fanny Burney's *Evelina*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte Brontë's *Vilette*, and George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*—deploy strategies of covert rebellion, especially in the form of capable heroines who subvert the separa-

tion of the spheres and protest inequalities of class and gender.

Mary Poovey's *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (1984), a marxist-feminist study, develops a sociological and psychological perspective on literary and social "style," taking three writers whose publications roughly span 1790-1840. Complementing Homans' work, Poovey shows how their novels, political tracts, journals, and letters respond to the cultural model of the woman as a "proper lady"—modest, self-effacing, and not given to self-assertion as an author.

Deirdre David's *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot* (1982) has a similar interest in showing how three Victorian-era intellectual women, a political journalist, a poet, and a novelist, subvert as well as affirm the structure of patriarchal power in their struggle to accommodate their professional ambitions to dominant codes of female modesty and propriety.

U. C. Knoepflmacher's "Genre and the Integration of Gender: From Wordsworth to George Eliot to Virginia Woolf" (*Victorian Literature and Society: Essays Presented to Richard D. Altick*, ed. James R. Kincaid and Albert J. Kuhn, 1984), treats blurrings of gender difference in the pre-social world of childhood and the fateful confrontation with the stereotypes and social structures of adulthood.

Stuart Curran's "Romantic Poetry: The I Altered" (*Romanticism and Feminism*, ed. Anne K. Mellor, 1988), is a lively discussion of neglected women poets in the Romantic era, with particular attention to the way their writing alters the prevailing view of the "Romantic ego" (derived from a male canon) as isolated in its subjectivity. This was one of the first essays to treat women's poetry in the Romantic era.

Marlon Ross's *The Contours of Masculine Desire: Romanticism and the Rise of Women's Poetry* (1989),

with new attention to the professional female writer and the growth of women's poetry from 1730-1830, reassesses writing by men and the construction of "Romanticism" as a masculine enterprise. Among writers discussed are Mary Wortley Montagu, Hannah More, Anna Barbauld, Joanna Baillie, Mary Tighe, Felicia Hemans, and Letitia Elizabeth Landon ("L.E.L.").

Harriet Kramer Linken's "The Current Canon in British Romantic Studies," in *College English 53* (1991), is a revealing study to contemplate in relation to Jane Tompkins' essay on women's fiction; even after nearly 15 years of feminist criticism and attention to women writers, Linken reports, the male-dominated canon is still in force in most classrooms around the country, whose syllabi are rarely receptive even to such culturally influential works as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Anne K. Mellor's *Romanticism & Gender* (1992) addresses the traditional view of British Romanticism as a movement defined chiefly by six male poets (Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats) and, pointing out that from 1780-1830 women were a vigorous presence in literary culture, she discusses twenty of them—poets, essayists, dramatists, and novelists. She remaps the field with gender, provisionally defining a "masculine" and a "feminine" Romanticism. Among the writers she considers are Mary Wollstonecraft, Anne Radcliffe, William Wordsworth, Dorothy Wordsworth, Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Felicia Hemans, L.E.L., John Keats, and Emily Brontë.

Anne Mellor and Richard Matlak's classroom anthology, *British Literature: 1780-1830* (1996), reflects "the major role that women played in the production of literature at this time, as well as the wide range of social and political debates to which both canonical and non-canonical writers responded." Of about sixty writers in its contents, almost half, twenty-five, are women.

Angela Leighton's *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart* (1992) complements Deirdre David's study. With historical research, biographical criticism, and feminist critique, Leighton investigates how

publishing female poets negotiated conflicts between imaginative experience and Victorian codes of sexual and social morality.

Angela Leighton and Margaret Reynold's *Victorian Women Poets: An Anthology* (1995) offers large selections from the major poets and broad coverage of previously marginalized poets.

American 19th Century

Nina Baym's informative *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America 1820-1870* (1978) has been a valuable resource for subsequent work. See also her contemporaneous essay, "Portrayal of Women in American Literature, 1790-1870" in Springer's *What Manner of Woman*.

Judith Fetterley's *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (1978; ext. Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*) is an important initiation of the "feminist critique" of men's writing. Fetterley defines the alienating process of "immasculation" by which women readers have to accommodate themselves to an androcentric, even misogynist, literary canon—in this case, the classic American novel, whose heroes are male and whose antagonists are female or troped as feminine. A follow-up essay, "Reading about Reading" (1986; in Flynn and Schweickart's *Gender and Reading*), looks at the construction of this canon by men resistant to reading women's texts.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis's *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (1985) studies how women writers disrupt or refuse the forms of closure (typically bearing terms of ideological resolution, e.g. the marriage plot) that characterize the masculine tradition of representing women.

Alicia Suskin Ostriker's *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women's Poetry in America* (1987) ar-

gues that women poets have operated subversively against the dominant tradition, often in code or disguise, masking passion in religious piety and dissembling rebellion as obedience; 20th-century poets have emerged from these constraints in ways that are challenging and changing the shape of American poetry.

20th-Century British & American

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (1988-1990) is a massive three-part work conceived as a sequel to *The Madwoman in the Attic*. Its focus is on 20th-century women's writing, read in the context of literary and social history and texts by male contemporaries. *The War of the Words* (1988) surveys the social, literary, and linguistic interactions between men and women from the middle of the 19th century to the present, emphasizing the different inflections of "modernism" for men and women as Victorian ideologies of femininity confront late-century feminism and the changing, often antagonistic, relationships between the sexes in patriarchal culture. *Sexchanges* (1989) concentrates on writers associated with the crisis of gender in the Great War—wrought not only by shifting definitions of "masculine," "feminine," and the "androgyne," but also by a newly visible lesbian literature. *Letters from the Front* (1990) discusses the emergence of feminism in writing by modernist women.

Marianne DeKoven's *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism* (1991) complements Curran's work in Romanticism and Gilbert & Gubar's work on 20th-century writing in its concern to reassess the traditional definition of "modernism" by a canon of male writers. What happens when questions of gender, socialism, and feminism, along with the work of contemporaneous women writers, are factored in? Even as male modernists welcomed a release from Victorian strictures, they feared the loss of male hegemony, while female modernists feared retaliatory punishment.

IV. General Feminist Theory

Adrienne Rich's "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," in *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966-1978* (1979; ext. Eagleton's *Feminist Literary Theory*), urges a feminist critique of "how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us, how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative."

Annette Kolodny's controversial "Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice, and Politics of Feminist Literary Criticism" (*Feminist Studies* 6, 1980; rpt. Showalter's *The New Feminist Criticism* and Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*, ext. Eagleton's *Feminist Literary Theory*) urges a "playful pluralism" over polemical debates about a "basic conceptual model," positioning feminist criticism as part of an "ongoing dialogue of competing potential possibilities." For a rebuttal, see Jane Marcus's "Storming the Toolshed" (*Signs* 7, 1982; rpt. Warhol and Herndl); Marcus argues that pluralism is premature: "Dancing shoes will not do. We still need our heavy boots and mine detectors"—that is, an aggressive advocacy of feminist issues as well as a concerted effort to work out models (e.g. collaboration) that (supposedly) depart from the paradigms of achievement in the male academy.

Jonathan Culler's "Reading as a Woman" (*On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, 1982; rpt. Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*) reviews debates on the definition of "woman," evaluates some notable arguments about gender and reading, and reaches the (deconstructive) conclusion that "for a woman to read as a woman is not to repeat an identity or an experience that is given but to play a role she constructs with reference to her identity as a woman, which is also a construct"—the process revealing a "division within any reading subject and the 'experience' of that subject."

Nina Baym's "The Madwoman and Her Languages: Why I Don't Do Feminist Theory" (*Tulsa Studies in Wom-*

en's Literature, 1984-85; rpt. Benstock's *Feminist Issues* in *Literary Scholarship,* Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*) argues that by the mid-1980s, feminist theory has become legalistic, judgmental, misogynist, tragic and monolithic, and urges a return both to pluralism and to empirical studies.

Elizabeth Meese's *Crossing the Double-Cross: The Practice of Feminist Criticism* (1986) addresses the vexed mid-1980s question of feminist criticism's relationship to theory, particularly post-structuralism and Marxism, and the consequences for practical criticism. Maintaining allegiance to "defiant" feminism, Meese studies British writers such as Woolf and Atwood in relation both to American writers and to theorists such as Stanley Fish, Terry Eagleton, and Jacques Derrida.

Christine Battersby's *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics* (1989), observing that "genius" has from classical times been defined as male, explores the dilemma faced by female creators, in particular the way male artists have absorbed traditionally disparaged "female" qualities—passion, imagination, sexuality—into a revised ethic of male genius that is still set against female participation. Wide-ranging and clearly written, this is a good introductory study.

Rita Felski's *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (1989) addresses the definitions of a "feminist" literature, text, and aesthetics; the construction of feminist autobiography (particularly the privileged mode of "confession") and the novel of self-discovery; and the relation between subjectivity and the feminist social movement. Arguing that a gender-based analysis of what is intrinsically "female," "feminine" and "feminist" is inadequate, even irrelevant, Felski urges attention to the social conditions in which these terms are produced, and their social functions, effects, and evaluations in particular historical contexts.

Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) assumes a reader who is al-

ready versed in basic feminist theory. Challenging the ontological and epistemic stability not only of gender categories but also of sexual difference, Butler argues that these designations are products of political institutions, cultural practices, and ideological discourses.

V. French Feminist Theory

Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974; tr.1985) examines the status of "woman" as mysterious, unknowable "other" in male-authored Western philosophy and psychoanalytic theory, focusing on Plato, Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Jacques Derrida. *This Sex Which is Not One* (1977; tr.1985) reads female sexuality in a variety of perspectives: the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Lacan; classical treatments of sexual difference; erotic pleasure; a Marxist analysis of woman as commodity.

Hélène Cixous' most famous essay, "The Laugh of the Medusa" (tr. *Signs* 1976; and Marks and de Courtivron, below), argues for the revolutionary power of *l'écriture féminine* as "an explosive, utterly destructive, staggering return" of the socially and culturally repressed. See also "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks / Ways Out / Forays" (tr. Marks and de Courtivron) and "Castration or Decapitation" (tr. Annette Kuhn, *Signs* 7, 1981). Cixous at once enacts *l'écriture féminine* (fragments, wordplay, and other avant-garde practices) and makes a theoretical case for such textuality as the rhythm of the female body, especially the sexual body, in refutation of Freudian and Lacanian descriptions of the feminine as the "lack" of male potency.

Julia Kristeva's *Desire in Poetic Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (tr. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez, 1980) and *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974; tr. Margaret Waller, 1981) are influential psycholinguistic studies that connect theories of language acquisition, the speaking subject, aesthetic practice, sexuality, and socio-political

culture. "Revolution" refers to avant-garde textual practices. For the consequences for the writer's identity, see "A Question of Subjectivity," *Woman's Review* 12 (1986).

Monique Wittig's "One is Not Born a Woman" (*Feminist Issues*, 1981) and "The Category of Sex" (ibid., 1982) address questions of sex and gender from the perspective of socio-historical construction; working with French feminism, lesbian theory, and historical materialism, Wittig focuses on issues of "langue" and sexuality within social, political and historical contexts.

Key essays in French feminism are gathered by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron in *New French Feminisms* (1980), not only a handy resource but important as the first anthology to present French essays to English readers.

Assessments of French Feminism

Domna Stanton's "Language and Revolution: The Franco-American Dis-Connection," in *The Future of Difference: The Scholar and the Feminist*, ed. Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine (1980), provides a good overview of the chief statements and their quarrel with American feminist criticism.

Peggy Kamuf's "Replacing Feminist Criticism" (*diacritics* 12, 1982) addresses academic feminist criticism, concerned that its focus on the author and literary tradition deploys the same methodology that has suppressed and silenced women all along; what is needed, she argues, is the French theoretical emphasis on the subversive challenge of the "feminine" text.

Nancy Miller's "The Text's Heroine: A Feminist Critic and Her Fictions" (*diacritics* 12, 1982) replies to Kamuf, arguing that the concern with women writers has an important historical and political value and that post-structuralist theory needs to serve a gynocentric political agenda.

Alice Jardine's *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity* (1985) looks at women and modernity in relation to Anglo-American and French theories of the "feminine" and seeks terms of mediation and common interest.

Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (1985; ext. Eagleton's *Feminist Literary Criticism*), an acerbic, polemical survey of feminist literary criticism from its modern inception through deconstructive theory, begins with the question of Virginia Woolf, whose aesthetic of androgyny has seemed to some (Showalter) a "flight" from the political reality of gender and to others (Moi) a bold deconstruction of gender difference in textual strategies that "reject metaphysical essentialism." Aligning herself with French feminist theory (Simone de Beauvoir, Cixous, Irigary, and especially Kristeva), Moi attacks American feminist criticism as untheoretical (her title's emphasis on "theory" over "criticism" is telling), targeting "images of women" modes and their most influential statements: Moers' *Literary Women*, Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own*, Gilbert & Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*, and Jane Marcus's reading of a "radical" Virginia Woolf. In 1981 Marcus championed Woolf as a "guerrilla fighter in a Victorian skirt," turning her "alienation from British patriarchal culture and its capitalist and imperialist forms and value" into writing as "a revolutionary act" ("Thinking Back Through Our Mothers" in her anthology, *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*), a perspective that Moi finds in need of "recourse to either Marxist or post-structuralist theory."

Ann Rosalind Jones's "Inscribing Femininity: French Theories of the Feminine" (1985, in Greene and Kahn's *Making a Difference*) provides a cogent guide through the chief statements. See also "Writing the Body, Towards an Understanding of *L'Écriture Féminine*" (*Feminist Studies* 13, 1987), a capable report with some cautions about the overspecifying of gender as a key category (what about race and class?), the flirtation with biological essentialism in body-based linguis-

tic theory, and the limitations of this theory in relation to the rich cultural resources for linguistic practice.

Mary Jacobus's *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism* (1986) presents essays in literary criticism that have been influenced by French feminist theory.

Janet Todd's *Feminist Literary History: A Defence* (1988) makes a polemical case for "American socio-historical feminist criticism" against a decade of attacks from, variously, deconstructive/psychoanalytic/French-feminist theories.

Diana Fuss's *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature & Difference* (1989), taking up debates between essentialists (gender difference is innate) and constructionists (it's a social and cultural determination), develops a critique of French feminist theory by reading its discourses of gender "difference" alongside other discussions of difference, racial and hetero-/homo-sexual.

Mary Poovey's "Feminism and Deconstruction" (*Feminist Studies* 14, 1988) offers an evaluation of the sometimes uncomfortable meeting of these theoretical interests.

VI. Feminist Criticism and Issues of Class, Race, Lesbian Identity, and Male Participation

Class & Feminist Criticism

Cora Kaplan's "Pandora's Box: Subjectivity, Class and Sexuality in Socialist Feminist Criticism" (1985; Greene and Kahn's *Making a Difference*; rpt. Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*) examines a split in the feminist movement (already evident in Wollstonecraft and Woolf) between those who emphasize psycho-sexual

oppression and those who emphasize social and economic oppression.

See also Judith Lowder Newton's *Women, Power, and Subversion* (above).

Race & Feminist Criticism (the Example of American Literature)

Elizabeth Schulz's "'Free in Fact at Last': The Image of the Black Woman in Black American Fiction" (1977, in Springer's *What Manner of Woman*) argues that novels by black Americans show the black woman "resisting the racist and sexist controls" (the stereotypes of American culture and literature) that have sought to make her invisible.

Barbara Smith's "Towards a Black Feminist Criticism" (*Conditions Two*, 1977; rpt. Showalter's *The New Feminist Criticism*, ext. Eagleton's *Feminist Literary Theory*), argues that both white feminist criticism and Afro-American criticism have neglected black women writers, who "constitute an identifiable literary tradition," manifested in "common approaches to the act of creating literature as a direct result of the specific political, social, and economic experience they have been obliged to share."

Nellie McKay's "Reflections on Black Women Writers: Revising the Literary Canon" (*The Impact of Feminist Research in the Academy*, ed. Christie Farnham, 1978; rpt. Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*) reveals a different "American experience," in terms of both race and gender, in African-American women's literature and defines a tradition of aesthetic practices grounded in social and political experience.

Barbara Christian's "Trajectories of Self-Definition: Placing Contemporary Afro-American Women's Fiction" (*Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Women Writers*, 1983; rpt. Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*)

studies how Afro-American women manage self-expression as they address white and black communities of readers and confront a compound of racism and sexism in America.

Susan Willis's "Black Women Writers: Taking a Critical Perspective" (1985; Greene and Kahn's *Making a Difference*) examines how Black women write about such key topics as the community, the journey, and sexuality.

Valerie Smith's "Gender Theory and Afro-American Criticism" (1988; Showalter's *Speaking of Gender*, below) discusses the changing status of gender in Afro-American criticism, especially in relation to the "others"—non-blacks and men—who are writing about literature by black women.

Elaine Showalter's "A Criticism of Our Own: Autonomy and Assimilation in Afro-American and Feminist Literary Theory" (*The Future of Literary Theory*, ed. Ralph Cohen, 1989; rpt. Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*) offers a sharp analysis of the parallel evolutions of Afro-American and feminist literary criticism.

Diana Fuss's "Race Under Erasure? Poststructuralist Afro-American Literary Theory" (*Essentially Speaking*, 1989) discusses the tensed confrontation of poststructuralist deconstruction and the historical subject of race.

Lesbian-Feminist Criticism

See, above, Butler's *Gender Trouble*, Gilbert & Gubar's *Sexchanges*, Wittig's essays, and Garber's *Vested Interests*.

Catherine R. Stimpson's "Zero Degree Deviancy: The Lesbian Novel in English" (1981, in Abel's *Writing and Sexual Difference*) offers a sentimental reading of the emergence of a lesbian literary tradition from a homophobic oppression (stories of deviancy and damnation—Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*) to

shape stories of positive, enabling escape from rigid binaries of gender into more fluid and multiple possibilities.

Bonnie Zimmerman's essays, "Exiting from Patriarchy: The Lesbian Novel of Development" (*The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, ed. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland, 1983) and "What Has Never Been: An Overview of Lesbian Feminist Criticism" (1981; rpt. Greene and Kahn's *Making a Difference*, Showalter's *The New Feminist Criticism*, Warhol and Herndl's *Feminisms*, ext. Eagleton's *Feminist Literary Theory*) critique the heterosexism of mainstream feminist criticism. Noting the typically closeted and encoded character of lesbian writing, Zimmerman reports on the development of lesbian scholarship in recovering its texts, and proposes a distinctly lesbian literary tradition, aesthetic practice, and form of feminist criticism.

Jean E. Kennard's "Ourself behind Ourself: A Theory for Lesbian Readers" (*Signs* 9, 1984; rpt. Flynn and Schweickart's *Gender and Reading*), noting that the category of "woman reader" involves differences of race, class, and sexual orientation, argues for attention to the difference between the lesbian and the heterosexual woman reader.

Diana Fuss's "Lesbian and Gay Theory: The Question of Identity Politics," in *Essentially Speaking*, and her introduction to her anthology, *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (1992), review many of these issues and attendant complications.

Male Feminist Criticism

Stephen Heath's "Men in Feminism" (1987; rpt. Eagleton's *Feminist Literary Criticism*) examines the negotiation of feminist criticism by men, who may be seriously interested and politically supportive, but who need to beware of appropriating it, thus fulfilling one sexist stereotype.

Elaine Showalter's witty "Critical Cross-Dressing: Male Feminists and the Woman of the Year," *Raritan* 2 (1983) thinks it's too late, and discerns in male feminist criticism an effort to appropriate and colonize this field for their own careerist interests. Mary Jacobus's "Reading Woman (Reading)," in *Reading Woman* (1987), argues against Showalter from a French psychoanalytic perspective: because gender is a linguistic construction, feminist criticism needs to account for its unstable, often fluid play—a critical project that includes men as well as women.

In *Men in Feminism* (1987), Alice Jardine and Paul Smith organize a dialogue of male and female voices on this issue, provisionally (though not polemically) limiting it to heterosexual, white, academic feminism. They include the essays by Showalter and Heath above, as well as by themselves and other such well known feminist and cultural critics as Andrew Ross, Peggy Kamuf, Jane Gallop, Naomi Schor, Terry Eagleton, and Nancy Miller.

VII. Gender Criticism (Some Preliminary Documents)

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's influential *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) ranges widely across key works in English and American literature to analyze a phenomenon whereby the exchange of women mediates between men. Elaborating the effect on women of the male spectrum from homosocial to homoerotic interaction, this study was perhaps even more important for bringing issues of homophobia and male homosexual desire into a clarifying critical discussion.

Elaine Showalter's anthology, *Speaking of Gender* (1989), more or less announces the evolution of feminist criticism into gender criticism. She reviews "The Rise of Gender," including the controversy over "male feminism," and then presents a first group of essays ad-

dressing the gender subtexts of three major movements in literary theory (Afro-American criticism, Yale-school deconstruction, and reader-response criticism), followed by essays showing how gender criticism can illuminate writing by both men and women. Among works of British literature discussed are Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the gothic novel, and Henry James's short stories.

VIII. Electronic Resources

Bibliographies and on-line texts are emerging daily. Among the most substantial bibliographies at the moment is Alan Liu's "Voice of the Shuttle" which emanates from the University of California at Santa Barbara (contact: ayliu @humanitas.ucsb.edu). As for texts: Georgetown University's CPET system has a catalogue of projects in e-texts. Other major resources include: University of Virginia Electronic Text Center (etext@virginia.edu) and Brown University's Women Writers Project (wwp@brownvm.brown.edu).

A Celebration of Women Writers

Links to web sites of many women writers, with individual writers' sites coming first, followed by collections and bibliographies. URL: http://www.cs.cmu.edu/afs/cs.cmu.edu/user/mmbt/www/women/writers.html .

Laura Mandell's Home Page

Syllabi, projects, and other resources for 18th- and 19th-century British literature courses that pay substantial attention to women writers and gender issues. URL: http://www.muohio.edu/~mandellc/ .

Syllabi & Other Course Materials for Literature Courses

Jack Lynch's extraordinarily rich collection, though only a few syllabi focus on women. URL: http://www.english.upenn.edu/~jlynch/syllabi.html . Also of interest on this page is a link to Lynch's Literary Resources on the Net, which includes a section on Feminism and Women's Literature. URL: http://www.english.upenn.edu/~jlynch/Lit/women.html

About the Author

Susan J. Wolfson is Professor of English at Princeton University, where she has been since 1991. Before then she taught for thirteen years at Rutgers University, New Brunswick. Her degree is from the University of California at Berkeley, and she is the recipient of fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Her publications have concerned a variety of subjects in the British Romantic era. Her most recent book is *Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* (Stanford University Press, 1996). Other books include: *The Questioning Presence: Wordsworth, Keats, and the Interrogative Mode in Romantic Poetry* (Cornell University Press, 1986); *Lord Byron: Selected Poems* coedited with Peter Manning (Penguin, 1996), and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, by Robert Louis Stevenson, a critical edition coedited with Barry V. Qualls (Washington Square Press, 1995). She is currently completing *Figures on the Margin: The Language of Gender in British Romanticism* forthcoming from University of Pennsylvania Press, an edition of *Felicia Hemans*, coedited with Gary Kelley; and "The Romantics & their Contemporaries," coedited with Peter Manning, for *The Longman's Anthology of British Literature* (forthcoming 1997). She has published numerous essays and articles on such subjects as "Romanticism and Gender Criticism" (for *The Five-Book Prelude, William Wordsworth*, edited by Duncan Wu, forthcoming 1997) and on specific issues of gender in the Romantic era as they variously shape the writing of Felicia Hemans, the subject of the soul, John Keats, Lord Byron, William Wordsworth, Dorothy Wordsworth, Mary Shelley, Mary Lamb, and girls' readings of Shakespeare.

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The following publications consist of directories, manuals, and essays covering the primary information needed by educators to transform the curriculum to incorporate the scholarship on women. The publications have been designed to be brief, user friendly, and cross referenced to each other. They can be purchased as a set or as individual titles. Tables of contents and sample passages are available on the National Center Web page: http://www.towson.edu/ncctrw/.

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The *Directory* provides brief descriptions of 237 curriculum transformation projects or activities from 1973 to the present. It is intended to help educators review the amount and kinds of work that have been occurring in curriculum transformation on women and encourage them to consult project publications (see also *Catalog of Resources*) and to contact project directors for more information about projects of particular interest and relevance to their needs.

386 pages, 8½ x 11 hardcover, $30 individuals, $45 institutions, ISBN 1-885303-07-6

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The *Catalog* lists materials developed by curriculum transformation projects and national organizations that are available either free or for sale. These include proposals, reports, bibliographies, workshop descriptions, reading lists, revised syllabi, classroom materials, participant essays, newsletters, and other products of curriculum transformation activities, especially from those projects listed in the *Directory*. These resources provide valuable information, models, and examples for educators leading and participating in curriculum transformation activities.

(Available fall 1997)

➢ ***Introductory Bibliography for Curriculum Transformation***

The *Introductory Bibliography* provides a list of references for beginning curriculum transformation on women, especially for those organizing projects and activities for faculty and teachers. It does not attempt to be comprehensive but rather to simplify the process of selection by offering an "introduction" that will lead you to other sources.

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